

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: SOVIET-ITALIAN TRADE RELATIONS

REF: (A) ROME 3434 (NOTAL), (B) MOSCOW 1628

1. DURING LUNCHEON MARCH 4, ITALIAN EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY FABIO FABBRI CONFIRMED INFO CONTAINED PARAGRAPH 1 REF A. FABBRI SAID, HOWEVER, THAT ITALIANS WERE NOT SURPRISED AT SOVIET INTRANSIGENCE AT THIS POINT IN TIME ON QUESTIONS OF INTEREST RATE AND NEGOTIABLE PROMISSARY NOTES, ALTHOUGH THEY HAD HOPED FOR A MORE FLEXIBLE SOVIET POSTURE. ITALIANS CONSIDER MOSCOW MEETINGS AS MERELY OPENING-ROUND SPARRING IN WHICH EACH SIDE STATED ITS CASE, AND SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS ARE YET TO COME.

2. ACCORDING TO SOVIET ECONOMIC PRESS, NICOLE GIOJA, PRESIDENT
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OF ITALIAN-SOVIET CHAMBER OF TRADE, STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF CHANGE IN SOVIET FOREIGN TRADE STRUCTURE AT RECENT OPENING OF NEW CHAMBER OFFICE IN MOSCOW. THE CHANGE IS SUCH THAT "FOREIGN FIRMS ARE NOW ABLE TO HAVE DIRECT CONTACTS WITH SOVIET INDUSTRIAL MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS." FABBRI CONFIRMED THAT ITALIAN FIRMS HAVE ALREADY EXPERIENCED CHANGE IN ACCESSIBILITY TO INDUSTRIAL MINISTRIES (REF B). MOREOVER, ACCORDING TO FABBRI, THESE CHANGES EXTEND

BEYOND REDUCED ROLE FOR FOREIGN TRADE ORGANIZATIONS. WHEREAS PREVIOUSLY MEETINGS OF ITALIAN-SOVIET MIXED COMMISSIONS ON COOPERATION IN SPECIFIC AREAS WERE ARRANGED THROUGH THE STATE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SCST), ITALIAN EMBASSY IS NOW ABLE TO ARRANGE THEM DIRECTLY WITH INDUSTRIAL MINISTRY CONCERNED. MOREOVER, SCST IS NO LONGER REPRESENTED AT THESE MEETINGS; SOVIET SIDE NOW CONSISTS OF REPRESENTATIVES OF INDUSTRIAL MINISTRIES AND EVEN OF INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATIONS (OF OB'EDINENIYA). FABBRI STATED THAT THIS LATTER DEVELOPMENT GREATLY FACILITATES TALKS ON JOINT COOPERATION PROJECTS.

3. COMMENT. THESE DEVELOPMENTS TEND TO UNDERScore THE TREND TOWARDS GREATER DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN FOREIGN TRADE BY INDUSTRIAL MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS. WHILE WE ARE WATCHING THIS TREND WITH INTEREST, EVIDENCE ON HAND DOES NOT PERMIT US TO DRAW ANY CONCLUSIONS ON HOW FAR IT WILL PROCEED. THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE SEEMS LIKELY TO LOSE SOME OF ITS AUTHORITY. IT IS PARTICULARLY DEBATABLE, HOWEVER, WHAT THE ROLE OF THE SCST WILL BE. IT WILL APPARENTLY BE REDUCED IN THE WORK OF SOVIET-ITALIAN MIXED COMMISSIONS AND IN THE ARRANGING OF MEETINGS FOR ITALIAN FIRMS IN CONNECTION WITH JOINT COOPERATION PROJECTS (PERHAPS ONLY FOR ONES THAT ARE ALREADY APPROVED). HOWEVER, WE HAVE RECEIVED CONFLICTING REPORTS ABOUT ITS FUTURE PARTICIPATION IN FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS WHICH PROBABLY REFLECTS TO SOME EXTENT THE INTERNAL CONTEST WE ASSUME IS TAKING PLACE WITHIN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP AND BUREAUCRACY ON THIS GENERAL ISSUE. TOON

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